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FEDERAL GRAND JURY CHARGES PLANO, TEXAS, MAN WITH MAIL FRAUD AND MAKING FALSE STATEMENTS IN USED CAR SALES

A federal grand jury in Dallas returned an indictment today charging Plano, Texas, resident, Massoud Mortazavi-Koupai, a/k/a "Marcus "Mortazavi" and "Marcus Mortazavi-Koupai" with six counts of mail fraud and three counts of making a false statement on transfer of a used motor vehicle, related to a fraudulent scheme which included concealing structural damage and odometer discrepancies, announced U.S. Attorney Richard B. Roper of the Northern District of Texas. It is anticipated that Mortazavi-Koupai, 46, will immediately surrender to federal authorities and then appear before a U.S. Magistrate Judge.

According to the indictment, Massoud Mortazavi-Koupai was in the business of buying and selling used motor vehicles, doing business under the names of Interfirst Leasing and DFW Remarketing in Richardson, Texas. Mortazavi-Koupai bought vehicles at wholesale automobile auctions that required dealers selling at the auctions to notify the dealers if a motor vehicle had sustained structural damage. In accordance with wholesale auction practice, these structurally damaged vehicles were sold separately from vehicles without serious problems.

In addition, federal law requires that the seller of a vehicle must disclose the mileage on the vehicle to the buyer in writing, and sign the written disclosure. The seller must certify that the odometer reading reflects the actual mileage, or, if the seller knows that the odometer reading differs from the actual mileage, it also must be disclosed.

The indictment alleges that from at least January 1998 through August 2003, Mortazavi-Koupai ran a scheme in which he defrauded purchasers of used motor vehicles. He bought hundreds of vehicles knowing that the vehicles had previously sustained substantial structural damage and purchased numerous vehicles knowing the odometers were inaccurate. He deliberately concealed these facts both from his employees and consumers causing his employees to make false statement to consumers.

An indictment is an accusation by a federal grand jury and a defendant is entitled to the presumption of innocence unless proven guilty. If convicted, however, Mortazavi-Koupai faces a maximum statutory sentence of 120 years in prison and a \$1.5 million fine. He could also be ordered to pay restitution.

U.S. Attorney Roper praised the investigative efforts of the United States Department of Transportation. The case is being prosecuted by Trial Attorney Douglas W. Stearn of the Office of Consumer Litigation, Department of Justice and Assistant U.S. Attorney Joseph M. Revesz

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